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In Our Opinion

CIA, Under Fire, Deserves Country's Appreciation

THERE has been such a rash of attacks on the Central Intelligence Agency in recent months that Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, D-Conn., felt compelled to speak on the subject in the Senate recently, and what he had to say deserves attention.

"Baiting the CIA," Sen. Dodd said, "almost seems to have achieved the stature of a popular pastime."

He added, "It is a highly dangerous pastime because the CIA is one of the essential elements of our security."

There also is "something unbecoming" about the pastime, because the CIA cannot defend itself, he said. "Attacking the CIA, indeed, is something like beating a man who has his arms tied behind his back. For reasons of national security, the agency cannot confirm or deny published reports, true or false, favorable or unfavorable. It cannot alibi. It cannot explain. It cannot answer even the most outrageously inaccurate charges."

THE SENATOR SAID that perhaps the most popular charge against the CIA is that it operates completely without congressional oversight or supervision. It is this charge that has given rise to clamor for a congressional watchdog committee.

"This charge," Sen. Dodd said, "is totally and demonstrably untrue," and he proceeded to prove his statement.

Actually, the senator said, the CIA probably is one of the most supervised agencies in the federal government.

In both the House of Representatives and Senate, he pointed out, there are special subcommittees that oversee the activities of the CIA.

In the House, he said, these subcommittees are headed by Carl Vinson and Clarence Cannon; in the Senate they are headed by Richard B. Russell and Carl Hayden.

"These men," he said, "are among the most knowledgeable and conscientious legislators our nation has produced; and I, for one, am willing to abide by their judgment on matters which, for reasons of security, cannot be revealed to all members of Congress."

That isn't all, of course, the senator points out.

The act creating the CIA makes it clear that the agency operates under the direction of the National Security Council and as an arm of the council. The director of the CIA sits in the National Security Council, and he or his deputy meet as many as 30 times a year with various members of Congress.

Sen. Dodd recalled the time our U2 plane was downed in Russian territory in May of 1960. Many people jumped to the conclusion that the CIA had been operating on its own, without the authorization of the President or Congress. It was claimed that the U2 flights were endangering the security of the nation when, in fact, Sen. Dodd points out, they had defended us against the possibility of a surprise missile attack.

Speculation over lack of authorization for the flights was ended when President Eisenhower announced that he had personally approved the U2 program.

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GIVEN LESS PUBLICITY at the time, however, were remarks by Rep. Cannon in the House soon after the U2 incident. Cannon told the House:

"The plane was on an espionage mission authorized and supported by money provided under an appropriation recommended by the House Committee on Appropriations and passed by Congress.

"Although the members of the House have not generally been informed on the subject, the mission was one of a series and part of an established program with which the subcommittee in charge of the appropriation was familiar, and of which it had been fully apprised during this and previous sessions."

Sen. Dodd does not suggest that the CIA should be immune to criticism because of the sensitive nature of its operations. He says no government agency should be immune to criticism.

However, he does believe that there has been too much sensationalism, too many inaccuracies, and too little concern for the nation's security. He cites especially one report which charged that a CIA man in Viet Nam refused to carry out instructions of the U.S. ambassador, a charge which Dodd says proved to be a tissue of lies.

THE SENATOR BELIEVES that members of Congress, especially, should be careful in making charges, and that they should be made only on the floor of Congress, where debate and rebuttal would be possible.

"We should also take into account," the senator said, "the fact that every critical statement, whether accurate or inaccurate, will be picked up by the special bureau of the Soviet secret police whose task it is to discredit the CIA"

The late John F. Kennedy undoubtedly expressed the feelings of most Americans when, in addressing CIA personnel in November, 1961, he said: "... I am sure you realize how important is your work, how essential it is—and, in the long sweep of history how significant your efforts will be judged. So I do want to express my appreciation to you now, and I am confident that in the future you will continue to merit the appreciation of our country, as you have in the past."

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